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Jordan: Regime Stability

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An Intelligence Assessment

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May 1984*

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [redacted]
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis.
It was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations. [redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, NESAs,

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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 25 April 1984
was used in this report.*

We believe that the prospects for continued political stability in Jordan are good in the near term. King Hussein has close relations with key interest groups and skillfully balances the concerns of both native East Bank and Palestinian constituencies.

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Growing economic, social, and political problems, however, could undermine the long-term stability of the regime.

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Jordanians are becoming more insistent on broader participation in the government's decisionmaking process. The King's recall of the lower house of Parliament only temporarily dispelled domestic discontent. Jordanians will not accept Parliament as their only forum for political expression.

The decline in oil prices and the concomitant economic slowdown in the Persian Gulf states has reduced job opportunities for Jordanian emigrants, increasing the potential for large-scale domestic unemployment or at least underemployment for many educated Jordanians. As a consequence, the government will be confronted with a body of increasingly restive, politically alert young people.

Jordan's majority Palestinian population has the greatest potential for playing a disruptive role. They have been well assimilated into society and have developed strong family and economic ties with non-Palestinian Jordanians, but the relationship between the two groups is strained. We do not believe the Palestinians will threaten the Hashemite monarchy in the near term. Nevertheless, discriminatory practices against them will increase their discontent with Hashemite rule. Moreover, growing frustration with the lack of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem on the West Bank may compel them to view the East Bank as their homeland and mobilize to control it.

The military and the bedouin tribes remain the most loyal supporters of the King. Even they have become disgruntled over Hussein's preoccupation with foreign policy and inattentiveness to their interests. Most bedouin grievances can be traced to the decline in their political influence.

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NESA 84-10189
May 1984

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Islamic fundamentalism is spreading throughout Jordan as young people, dissaffected with politics, the Palestinian issue, or social and secular pressures, seek outlets of expression. In our judgment, fundamentalism does not threaten the regime in the near term. The possibility of a religiously motivated assassination by a fanatic, however, cannot be dismissed.

We believe Jordan's continuing poor relations with Syria encourage the Assad government to use its influence with opposition parties or with radical Palestinian groups to undermine the monarchy. Damascus will order its Palestinian assets to strike at Jordan if it appears that Hussein's talks with PLO chief Arafat are leading to concrete decisions. Syria also may exploit domestic discontent to destabilize Jordan, particularly by stimulating Jordan's Palestinian community to agitate against their second-class status.

The Syrian threat and the lack of explicit Arab backing are Hussein's primary considerations in determining his position toward US-sponsored peace negotiations, but he also is influenced by the views of his domestic constituencies. In our judgment, the presence of Jordan's Palestinian community compels Hussein to try to work out an accommodation with Arafat that would lead to negotiations.

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In our view, any government that would replace the Hashemites would be more radical and subject to Syrian and Soviet influence. Such a government would be a direct threat to the security of Israel because it probably would encourage Palestinian attacks from Jordanian territory.

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**Jordan:
Regime Stability****The Stabilizing Factors**

Jordan has enjoyed unprecedented political stability since King Hussein ousted the Palestinian fedayeen during the civil war in 1970-71. We attribute this stability principally to the King's successful leadership and the respect he commands from his people. King Hussein's close personal ties with the country's major political groups are the key to his political success.

Hussein is a charismatic leader whose charm and outgoing style have helped him to project a deep personal concern for the welfare of each constituency. He also learned early on that compromise was important for survival, and he has adjusted to sometimes unpleasant realities, a trait that has earned the respect of his countrymen.

Rapid economic growth over the last 10 years has contributed to Jordan's political stability. In a region as turbulent as the Middle East, Jordan has offered its citizens quality education, increasing their prospects for jobs and an improved standard of living. Economic advancement has to some extent offset unpopular restrictions on political activity throughout the country.

ing. Embassy sources indicate Jordan's majority Palestinian community is increasingly discontent with what it perceives to be its second-class status in society.¹ At the same time, the traditional bedrock of Hussein's support—the military and the bedouin tribes—believe that Hussein is overly preoccupied with foreign policy and is inattentive to their interests. Continuing restrictions on political activity, enforced since 1957, and social and economic problems developing out of rapid economic growth have aggravated the tensions within these communities.

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External tensions also have increased during the last year. Jordan's relations with Syria have continued to decline as Damascus has supported Fatah rebels against PLO chief Yasir Arafat.

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Political Restrictions

Jordanians are becoming more insistent on broader participation in the government's decisionmaking process. Most Jordanians have lived under political restrictions all of their lives, but public appeals for the revival of political parties suggest that they now are less willing to accept the King's explanation that such restrictions are necessary for Jordan's security and stability. They argue that Jordanians today are more sophisticated and will not fall prey to the political infighting that characterized the country in the 1950s and 1960s.

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¹ Jordan has the world's largest Palestinian community—approximately 25 percent of all Palestinians live there and constitute 50 to 60 percent of the Jordanian population. About 1 million of Jordan's Palestinians are registered refugees; 230,000 still live in camps.

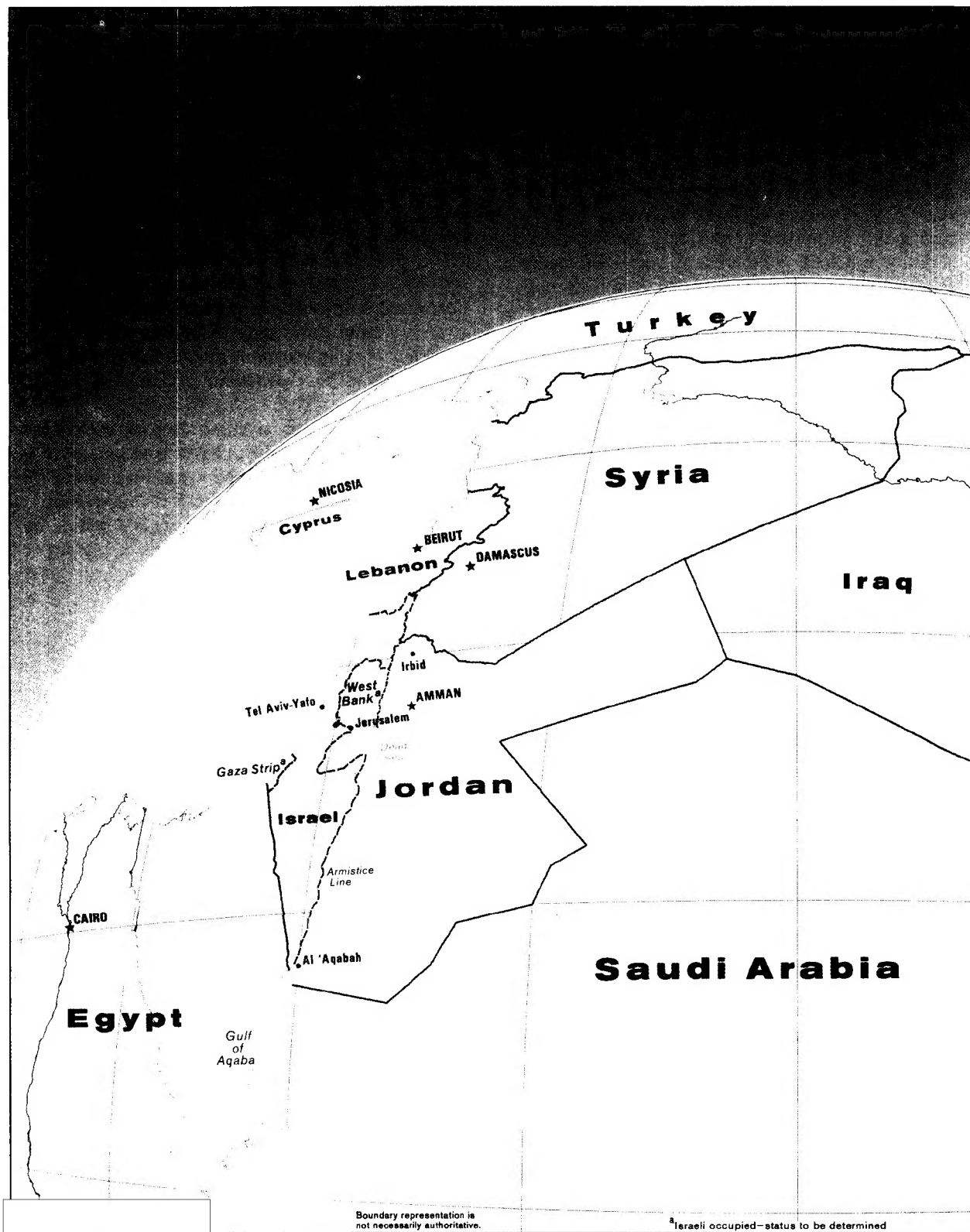
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Stability Weakening

Despite good prospects for political stability in the near term, a number of worrisome trends are emerg-

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Restrictions on Political Activity

Political parties were banned in Jordan in 1957 following a period of intense political unrest that culminated in a coup attempt. The King tried to reintroduce popular participation in 1971 by authorizing the formation of the Jordanian National Union. US Embassy reporting indicates that the party received little popular support because most Jordanians saw it as representing the King's interests. [redacted]

Since then popular political opinion has been expressed mostly through the Muslim Brotherhood and clandestine organizations. The King chose not to ban the Brotherhood along with other political parties because it represented Islamic elements that endorsed the Hashemite claim to the throne. The Brotherhood also serves as a counterweight to the influence of Communist and leftist activities, particularly on campuses. [redacted]

Clandestine groups such as the Islamic Liberation Party, the Ba'th Party, and the Communist Party have existed in Jordan for years, but we believe their membership is small. These groups use professional and trade associations as the major outlet for their political opinions. [redacted]

[redacted]

In recent years the King has considered ways of reviving popular participation in politics in order to respond to public pressure. He took his first step in that direction last January with the recall of Jordan's lower house of Parliament, the country's only elected body. [redacted]

The house, which was last elected in 1967, consists of 60 members—30 each from the East and West Banks. It was suspended in 1974 and dissolved in 1976 because elections could not be held in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The first order of business in the new session was to amend the Constitution to allow

for elections to be held only on the East Bank and for the appointment of West Bank members by a vote of the other parliamentarians. By using this formula, US Embassy officials say the King believes he has not endangered his ties to the West Bank, a primary concern that had prevented him from holding East Bank elections. [redacted]

Jordanians voted in a national election for the first time in 17 years in March, when the government held byelections to fill vacant East Bank seats in the lower house. Only eight positions from five electoral districts were affected, but the intense campaign demonstrated the Jordanians' keen interest in fuller participation in the political process. [redacted]

US Embassy reporting notes that issues raised during the campaign provided insight into potential problems if national elections were held. The election showed that conservative East Bankers were concerned about Palestinian representation and reapportionment of seats to avoid Palestinian domination of Jordan. The Palestinians used Islamic fundamentalism as an outlet for political expression because of frustration over Hashemite-imposed political restrictions in a country where they now are a majority. [redacted]

The disenchantment that accompanied the election also suggests that Jordan's return to democratic processes might create tensions similar to those of the 1950s. [redacted]

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The holding of the election also provided new platforms for Islamic and leftist ideologies. [redacted]

[redacted] pro-Syrian groups were extremely active during the campaign, although their success in attracting converts was overshadowed by candidates who were sympathetic to or members of the Muslim Brotherhood. [redacted]

[redacted] in the absence of political parties and platforms, Islamic and leftist groups will become more attractive outlets for political expression, particularly among the lower classes, than the government may have expected. [redacted]

The recall of Parliament may temporarily dispel domestic discontent with the political system, but we believe Jordanians will not be happy with Parliament as their only forum for political expression. Hussein is not likely to give Parliament broad power to change government policy. Unlike the last 10 years, the political safety valve of a rising standard of living is not likely to be available.² The slowdown in the economy and the concomitant lowering of expectations may encourage many Jordanians to seek redress through the political system. Certainly it will stimulate a more acrimonious debate over the allocation of resources. We believe some Jordanians denied a satisfactory role will turn to Islamic fundamentalism and leftist ideologies to vent their frustrations. [redacted]

The Threat of a Palestinian Majority

The relationship between the Palestinians and Jordanians is uneasy. Some Palestinians claim that they are treated as second-class citizens. They complain of discrimination in education and career opportunities. [redacted] they believe a "Jordanization" policy has been established that gives preference to East Bankers for opportunities such as admission to local universities and high-level positions in the government and military. [redacted]

² See appendix A: Social and Economic Problems Threaten Stability. [redacted]

[redacted] Palestinians theoretically compete with other Jordanians for acceptance at universities, vocational schools, or teacher training institutes without quota restrictions. The government, however, intervenes to ensure that East Bankers receive what it considers an equitable number of university places and scholarships because Palestinians have traditionally done better on the national entrance examination. The government also limits the number of Palestinians by determining placement on a geographic basis; most Palestinians live in the Amman area. The Palestinians resent that less qualified students from sparsely populated areas are given preference. [redacted]

The number of Palestinians employed in the public sector has declined since the civil war in 1970-71. Only a handful of Palestinians hold senior positions in the government because of continuing wariness in the Palestinian-Jordanian relationship, according to US Embassy officials. Similarly, few Palestinians hold high-ranking jobs in the military, even though they comprise as much as 40 percent of the Jordanian armed forces, including conscripts. [redacted] morale is low among Palestinian soldiers because they resent their exclusion from more senior military positions. [redacted]

[redacted] resentment between the Jordanians and Palestinians is based on power and wealth. [redacted] the Jordanians resent the wealth of the Palestinians, and the Palestinians resent the government's limitations on their political influence. [redacted]

Both Palestinians and East Bank Jordanians have prospered during the economic boom, but US Embassy officials report that conspicuous consumption by wealthy Palestinians fuels the resentment of poor East Bankers who believe that Palestinians have taken over Jordan. Conversely, many poor refugees point to the wealth of some East Bankers as proof that Palestinians are discriminated against in education and employment. [redacted]

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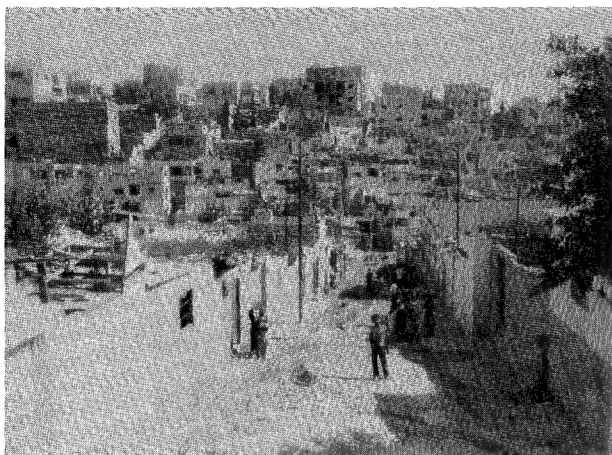
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Jebel Hussein camp for Palestinians

Syigma ©

The greatest discontent is among the Palestinians still living in Jordan's refugee camps, whose standard of living remains low. US Embassy officials report that the refugees complain not only about the lavish lifestyle of the King and other Jordanian officials but also about fellow Palestinians who have done well.

Despite the animosities between the Palestinians and Jordanians, US Embassy officials believe the division between the two groups is diminishing. They argue that some Palestinians are second-generation Jordanians, and intermarriage between the two groups is increasingly common. Jordan's booming economy over the last 10 years also has materially improved the lives of both groups, with some Palestinians actually becoming the wealthiest of Jordan's business community. The Embassy believes this wealth gives the Palestinians a strong social and financial stake in good relations with their Jordanian neighbors.

We believe the Embassy's assessment is valid only in the short run. Changing political, economic, and social conditions over time probably will magnify Palestinian discontent with continuing limitations, particularly as the population balance shifts more in their favor. Moreover, growing frustration with the unsolved Palestinian problem on the West Bank could prompt them to view the East Bank as their homeland and assert their numerical strength to achieve it.

Military Loyalty and Regime Stability

The Jordanian armed forces traditionally have been the principal power base of the Hashemite monarchy. The military, more than any other institution in Jordan, represents all sectors of East Bank Jordanian society. Although it is essentially apolitical, the military has an important voice in policy decisions that concern national security.

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The military, in our view, remains loyal to Hussein and the monarchy. The allegiance of the Army is due largely to individual loyalties to King Hussein, perquisites and prestige that accompany military service, and the realization among East Bankers that the Army protects their interests. The King has always commanded the affection and respect of a majority of military personnel, according to US Embassy officials. His courage and knowledge of military subjects along with his ability to handle arms and aircraft have won him widespread respect. He has reinforced this image by directing his troops at the front.

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On the negative side, individual complaints by military personnel have been increasing in recent years.

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The King's careful control of the communal composition of the Army is an important factor in assuring its continued loyalty, in our view. The majority of the military is drawn from native East Bankers because they are considered the most reliable. The King, however, also tries to distribute important military positions among the country's geographic, ethnic, and religious groups. Intercommunal jealousies remain, but Hussein has been able to avoid serious discontent by carefully monitoring the morale of each group and by promoting its members to senior positions when necessary.

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We believe that Palestinians within the military are a potential source of disaffection because of their exclusion from combat units and command positions. The King has tried to reduce their resentment by placing them in good positions in the specialized branches of the armed forces, which also works to the advantage of the regime because of the Palestinians' superior education and technical qualifications. We believe there are limits to how far Hussein can accommodate Palestinian concerns, however, without risking the support of his East Bank constituents. [REDACTED]

The desirability of military service has diminished because of improved opportunities in the economy and an antiquated promotion system, according to US Embassy officials. Military service was once the best paid profession in Jordan, but inflation has eroded military pay and allowances. Military leaders now fear that they will lose personnel with specialized skills to more lucrative civilian jobs. Military pay remains sufficient to guarantee a reasonable standard of living, but it no longer provides the relatively affluent lifestyle that officers and even enlisted men enjoyed in the 1950s and 1960s. [REDACTED]

There is, moreover, a growing perception within the military that King Hussein is increasingly aloof and no longer concerned with their well-being. US Embassy officials report that this opinion has been reinforced by the inability of the Commander in Chief, Lt. Gen. Zayd Bin Shakir, to maintain the personal touch that characterized his predecessors because of the demands of running an increasingly complex and modern military establishment. Both the King and Bin Shakir rely on lower-level officers to foster loyalty based on communal and professional associations. These loyalties help to compensate for the diminished personal contact the average officer has with the senior leadership. [REDACTED]

Developments that would erode the loyalty of the armed forces, in our view, include unrestrained corruption at the highest levels or a change in the communal composition of the armed forces that diluted the influence of East Bank Muslims. [REDACTED]

We believe the military will continue to be a loyal, cohesive organization for the present. Hussein has strong support within the top leadership, which will act to dispel grievances before they reach a dangerous level. [REDACTED]

In the event of the King's death, we believe that the military initially would transfer its loyalty to Crown Prince Hassan upon his succession to the throne, but he probably will have difficulty retaining their support in the long run. US Embassy officials say he is knowledgeable in military matters and well respected by the senior officer corps. [REDACTED]

The Bedouin

The bedouin have been loyal supporters of the Hashemites since the days of King Abdallah, and we believe the King regards them as an important asset in the East Bank hierarchy despite their diminishing numbers. Traditional seminomadic tribes accounted for nearly half of Jordan's population 50 years ago. Today, US Embassy officials say fewer than 5 percent fit the definition of bedouin as "inhabitants of the desert." About 20 percent of East Bankers, most of whom are one or two generations removed from seminomadic life, think of themselves as bedouin. US Embassy officials emphasize that tribal connections remain strong despite changing lifestyles. [REDACTED]

We believe King Hussein and other senior government officials were confident until the summer of 1983 that they were addressing adequately the political concerns of the bedouin. Last July, however, a

³ See appendix B: Jordan Under Hassan's Leadership. [REDACTED]

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clash occurred between the Bani Hassan tribe and Jordanian security forces over the bulldozing of homes the tribe had built on government-owned land. The incident brought to light broader grievances about what the bedouin perceive to be governmental indifference to their needs. []

Bedouin leaders have aired their complaints in a series of recent conversations with US Embassy officials. Most evident in their comments is the frustration they feel over urbanization and rapid modernization and the resulting alteration of their way of life. []

They complained mostly about their lack of access to the palace. Direct access traditionally has been a key feature of the special relationship that the tribal leaders had with the King. In recent years, their access has been restricted as the government bureaucracy has expanded and the King has become more preoccupied with foreign affairs. The King also has less time and freedom to visit with tribal leaders in their homes, a custom that most observers believe helped enhance the King's support among the bedouin. []

The bedouin resent the King's preoccupation with foreign affairs, particularly the Palestinian issue. US Embassy officials report that most bedouin still see the Palestinians as interlopers who threaten Jordan's internal stability by their demographic dominance and by their pressure on the King to solve Palestinian problems. Bedouin leaders are concerned about renewed talks between Hussein and Arafat. Most of them do not trust the PLO chairman, according to Embassy reporting, and do not believe that Hussein should take the political risks involved in a Jordanian move to launch peace negotiations. []

The bedouin also are concerned that the revival of Parliament will invite the Palestinians to strengthen their position within the political structure at bedouin expense. According to Embassy reporting, some tribal leaders complain that they are underrepresented in Parliament, with only three of the 30 East Bank seats reserved for them. The leaders argue that at least 20 percent of the East Bank positions should be allotted to the tribes. Other tribal leaders have advocated increasing the number of East Bank deputies because about four times as many people now live on the East as on the West Bank. []

Tribal leaders also complain that the government has not addressed the growing social and economic problems that they believe hit hardest in the bedouin community. They interpret Amman's neglect in bringing basic services to rural Jordan and in building an industrial and commercial base outside of Amman as evidence of the government's and the King's declining interest in their well-being. []

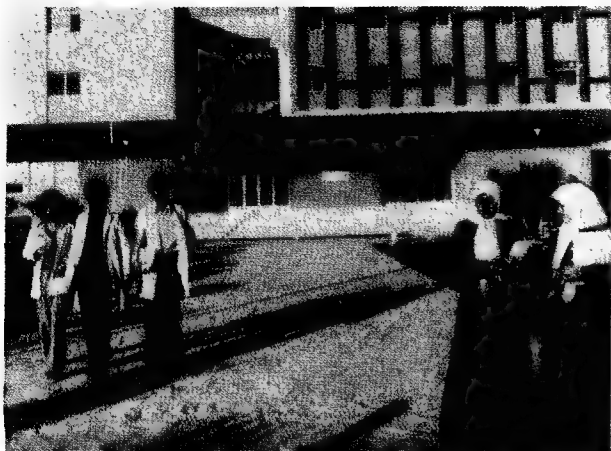
US Embassy officials report that a majority of the estimated 8,500 young Jordanians studying in the USSR and Eastern Europe come from East Bank tribes. These youths now are finding that they cannot compete in the job market because of an apparent bias against hiring graduates of Soviet and East European schools. US Embassy officials confirm that such graduates are having difficulty finding jobs. We believe that many youths in these circumstances will vent their frustrations by joining Islamic fundamentalist or leftist political organizations. []

Islamic Fundamentalism

Islamic fundamentalism has gained in appeal throughout Jordan, particularly among young professionals. According to US officials, fundamentalism is appealing because it is one of the few political outlets that evade governmental restrictions. []

A senior Jordanian official recently told the US Embassy that he believes some Jordanians have turned to religion as an ideology replacing Nasirism and Communism. But the official estimates that most converts have turned to Islam out of dissatisfaction with current political restraints, with the Palestinian issue, or because of social and secular pressures. He sees the latter as the most dangerous because its constituents do not know what they want and are vulnerable to manipulation. US Embassy officials report that the Palestinians, in particular, despairing of a political or military solution to the Palestinian issue, are turning to Islam. []

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Traditional dress appears more frequently alongside Western styles on university campuses [redacted]

A symptom of growing fundamentalism, in the Embassy's opinion, is the increase in the use of Islamic dress and the victories of Islamic slates in student, professional, and local government and parliamentary elections. Fundamentalists won three of the eight seats in the March byelections for Parliament. [redacted]

Young men and women primarily have adopted religious garb to demonstrate their adherence to Islam, although US Embassy contacts claim that some of the girls are paid by fundamentalist advocates to cover themselves. Other Embassy sources have commented that conservative dress is appearing on campus only because more students from rural areas are seeking higher education. Still another view is that the increase in the outward adherence to fundamentalism is a consequence of peer pressure and a desire to conform. Whatever the reasons, an expatriate university instructor has told US Embassy officials that he regards the trend as worrisome. [redacted]

Fundamentalist students are becoming more vocal about strict adherence to Islamic precepts and are attempting to segregate classes by sex and ban secular activities. According to a US Embassy official, fundamentalist students on the University of Jordan campus boycotted a disco organized by a student organization and refused to attend a USIS-sponsored lecture because the university would not provide separate buses to transport men and women. University professors also report that fundamentalist students object to

the discussion of topics such as America in sociology classes and Christian mythology in English classes. [redacted]

US Embassy officials say Hussein has tried to respond to fundamentalist interests by giving them access to the palace, supporting the Islamic Affairs Ministry, and publicly demonstrating his adherence to Islam. Religious elements of society also condemn the lavish secular lifestyle of many government and military leaders who are seen as less devout than the royal family. In the Embassy's opinion, the expensive villas and investments of these individuals, who are widely believed to have enriched themselves through illegal means, provide added ammunition for those who advocate the establishment of an Islamic state. [redacted]

The government believes it has fundamentalist activity under control, according to Embassy reports. The armed forces have a well-organized bureaucracy to channel religious activity. Practice of Islam is encouraged throughout the military as evidence of support for the throne and to counter the influence of secular nationalism, but members of the armed forces cannot belong formally to the Muslim Brotherhood or any other organization. [redacted]

We believe the fundamentalist movement does not threaten the regime in the near term, although the possibility of a religiously motivated assassination always exists. A US Embassy official comments that for now students are mainly interested in religious, not militant, political activity. Their activism, however, could in time combine with politics to produce a new wave of Arab student agitation. [redacted]

We believe the lack of widely recognized leaders reduces the threat that fundamentalism could become a popular movement. A few Muslim speakers are recognized as influential for their rhetorical powers, but they do not have a large personal following. The most popular of these is Shaykh Assad Tamimi of Hebron, a former head of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, but he is under close surveillance by Jordanian security. [redacted]

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The Islamic Liberation Party, which espouses the violent overthrow of conservative monarchies in the region, is not, in our view, strong enough to accomplish its aims. The ILP has been banned in Jordan since 1957, has only 200 to 300 members, and is largely infiltrated by Jordan's security apparatus. US Embassy officials report that members are periodically detained by security to ensure that they are aware of government surveillance. [redacted]

We do not believe the other clandestine parties in Jordan, such as the Communist and Ba'th Parties, pose an immediate threat to the stability of the regime. [redacted]

[redacted] In our opinion, members of these parties may also limit their activities to avoid harsh punishments against their illegal activities. [redacted]

[redacted] Syria has strong influence within these parties, suggesting that Jordanian authorities should take seriously their trouble-making potential. [redacted]

The Syrian Threat

We believe Jordan's continuing poor relations with Syria encourage the Assad government to use its influence with opposition parties or with radical Palestinian groups to undermine the Hashemite monarchy. [redacted]

Since last October Syria has demonstrated its influence with Palestinian groups with five attacks on Jordanian diplomats, resulting in at least one death, and several explosions in or near Jordan. Abu Nidal's Palestinian Black June organization claims responsibility for a number of these incidents, but we believe Black June was operating under orders from the Syrian Government. [redacted]

We believe that Damascus would order its various Palestinian surrogates to strike at Jordan if the Hussein-Arafat talks appeared to be leading to concrete decisions. US Embassy officials believe that Damascus wants to discourage Hussein from continuing his dialogue with Arafat. [redacted]

Damascus also has tried to exploit domestic discontent to destabilize Jordan. For example, the Syrian press portrayed the Jordanian Government's dispute last July with the bedouin tribes as a major bedouin uprising against the central government. [redacted]

Syria also could use its assets to work within Jordan's Palestinian community to intensify Palestinian dissatisfaction with its second-class status. Although Palestinian activities in Jordan, particularly in the refugee camps, are closely monitored, Hussein's efforts to broaden political participation may give leftist groups, such as the Ba'th Party, the opportunity to proselytize among them. [redacted]

[redacted] In our view, the leftist groups would campaign hard among the dissatisfied, particularly the Palestinian refugees, if Hussein decided to hold a national election. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

In our view, any government that would replace the Hashemites almost certainly would put distance between itself and the United States and be more subject to Syrian and, through Damascus, Soviet influence. A new government, except for one under Prince Hassan's rule, might alter Hussein's policies [redacted]

toward Israel, particularly by encouraging or condoning Palestinian attacks from Jordanian territory.

[redacted]

We believe that the most likely successor to Hashemite rule would be a government dominated by moderate Palestinians. They would face intense pressure from Syrian-backed Palestinian radicals to use Jordanian territory to strike at Israel and the West Bank. Jordan almost certainly would experience terrorist attacks similar to those now being conducted against King Hussein if Amman prevented radical groups from infiltrating Jordanian territory. [redacted]

Given the threat from Syria, we believe Hussein will seek advanced weaponry with increasing urgency. He would prefer US equipment but will turn to Europe or the Soviet Union as alternative sources of arms. The King will view US willingness to provide advanced arms as a key test of overall US support for Jordan.

[redacted]

The attitude of Hussein's domestic constituencies also affects the King's position on continued close cooperation with Washington. Although we do not believe Hussein would cut his ties with the United States, he will put distance between himself and Washington when challenged by criticism from internal supporters as he was following disclosure of purported US-Jordanian plans for a "Rapid Deployment Force." Moreover, growing popular frustration with US policy in the region has prompted Hussein to denounce US actions to reinforce his independence and Arab credentials. [redacted]

Hussein's position on entering peace negotiations is clearly constrained by the perceived Syrian threat, but it is also strongly influenced by the views of his domestic constituencies. In our judgment, Jordan's Palestinian community compels Hussein to try to reach an accommodation with PLO chief Arafat that would lead to negotiations. He primarily wants to forestall another influx of Palestinians into Jordan, which he believes would be inevitable if the West Bank's status remains unresolved or if Israel annexes the area. Hussein hopes to retain the Palestinians' acceptance by espousing their cause and by persuading Palestinians through his continuing efforts toward negotiations that he has not abandoned the West Bank. [redacted]

Hussein also is constrained by East Bank constituents, particularly those in the military establishment and the bedouin tribes, who advise the King to consider the security implications of a prominent Jordanian role in peace negotiations. In their view, the renewed dialogue with Arafat not only exposes Jordan to Syrian intimidation but also runs the risk of Hussein making too many concessions to the Palestinians.

[redacted]

Despite the long years of living side by side, US Embassy officials say that East Bankers distrust the Palestinians and will strongly resist being dominated by them. [redacted]

Hussein is concerned over Jordan's vulnerability to political and economic pressures from its Arab friends as well as the military pressures from Syria and radical Palestinians.⁵ He feels compelled to take account of the views of other moderate Arab leaders in both domestic and foreign policy decisions so as not to jeopardize Jordan's hard-won security. Hussein's reservations about entering peace negotiations with Israel under a US-sponsored initiative reflect the importance he places on his Arab relations. [redacted]

We believe the lack of explicit PLO and moderate Arab support for entering negotiations carries as much weight as the perceived Syrian threat in making Hussein more cautious. Although Hussein will continue to emphasize the need for US weaponry to enhance Jordan's military capability, we do not believe that arms alone will convince Hussein to risk a unilateral Jordanian peace initiative. In our judgment, Hussein will still see the threat from Syria as much more dangerous to the continuance of the Hashemite monarchy than his refusal to negotiate with Israel. We believe he will therefore choose to do nothing while advertising a semblance of progress in the hope of balancing the various internal and external pressures.

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Appendix A

Social and Economic Problems Threaten Stability

Jordan's dimming economic prospects, the result of reduced worker remittances and lower aid levels from the Persian Gulf states, are creating social and economic problems that eventually could threaten the stability of the country. US Embassy officials say Jordanians increasingly blame the government for the problems of urban congestion, job shortages, and insufficient public services that have accompanied rapid modernization.

Jordanians in pursuit of education, jobs, and comfortable living conditions have left the small towns for Amman, putting over half of Jordan's population in the capital and straining its ability to meet their needs. The Amman urban region comprises less than 4 percent of Jordan's East Bank territory but has approximately 60 percent of its population, 75 percent of its industry, and 85 percent of its industrial labor force. Amman's rapid growth over the last 10 years and the resultant congestion have greatly exaggerated the disparity in living conditions between the wealthy and the poor in Amman, according to US Embassy reporting.

The demographic concentration in the Amman area has forced the government to give top priority to improving basic services such as water and sewage. Urban migration becomes even more attractive because other areas of Jordan are neglected. US Embassy officials say government planners know that they must curb the flow of Jordanians to the cities, but they have had little success in attracting industry to the smaller towns. Jordan's port city of Al Aqabah in the south and Irbid in the north, where Jordan's second university is located, have expanded, but the population pressure on Amman continues.

The government's failure to make smaller towns more attractive and to finance better public facilities has stimulated low-level resentment among the local population toward the central government. US Embassy officials report that many people in small towns

believe that the growth in the government bureaucracy has made it much less responsive to their needs. The bedouin community is most affected by this neglect, according to US Embassy officials, and has begun to voice its bitterness.

US Embassy officials report that the government, in recognition of the problem, included municipal governors in planning sessions for the 1984 budget to permit them to register their concerns about rural development. They discussed plans to supply rural areas with electricity, water, and roads. Budgetary constraints, however, probably will prevent the government from following through and will cause local residents to question the government's credibility.

The decline in oil prices and concomitant economic slowdown in the Gulf have shrunk job opportunities for Jordanian emigrants, according to Embassy reporting, and subsequently slowed the growth in worker remittances—a major source of foreign exchange earnings. Over 300,000 Jordanian passport holders, many of whom are Palestinians, work in the Gulf in well-paying professional and technical jobs. US Embassy officials have noted that the opportunity for such jobs in the Gulf has made a large contribution to Jordan's stability by diverting political energies to material pursuits.

Embassy contacts indicate these workers are gradually returning to Jordan, which will exacerbate problems already developing in the domestic labor market. Jordan's high regard for education, particularly in the fields of medicine and engineering, is producing an overabundance of well-trained professionals. In our view, the potential for large-scale unemployment or at least underemployment of these individuals—a situation virtually unknown for the last decade—is growing.

The dean of the University of Jordan's medical school estimates that there are "at least 1,000" unemployed or underemployed doctors in Jordan today; according to the president of Jordan's Engineers Association, there may be as many as 1,500 engineers in the same category. These numbers probably will mushroom over the next few years as the 1,400 engineering students and 8,000 medical students, which the Ministry of Education believes are enrolled in foreign universities, return home.

In our view, the government will face an increasingly restive, politically alert group of professionals who have difficulty finding desirable work. US Embassy officials expect newly graduated Jordanians to be hit hardest by the deteriorating labor market. Their expectations are the highest: they have been taught by their elders that the key to landing a lucrative job, particularly in professional fields, is a good education. New graduates have seen their predecessors, who may not have done as well in school, receive numerous job offers. They also did not anticipate competing for jobs with experienced workers returning from the Gulf.

Jordanian officials have considered several programs to remove the potential problems associated with unemployment. The US Embassy reports that one prominent local educator has suggested the creation of a two-year "reeducation program to upgrade skills" at the University of Jordan. This idea is mainly directed at the large number of professionals educated in the USSR and Eastern Europe whose schooling is considered by Jordanian employers to be inferior, according to US Embassy officials. We believe that such an idea, while well meaning, could create bitterness and frustration over the degrading "remedial education." Feelings of discrimination would develop as it became apparent that the program was directed mainly at those who attended Soviet and East European universities.

Another proposal, which we see as more feasible, involves channeling a larger number of high school students into Jordan's two-year community colleges and vocational-technical schools. Labor statistics show that the job market for skilled technicians, unlike that for professionals, is still promising both in Jordan and the Gulf. We believe it will be difficult, however, to convince Jordanians that technical education is better than a professional degree.

In our judgment, social and economic problems do not yet threaten the regime, but they might become the basis of popular unrest if the government does not offer satisfactory solutions. The Jordanian populace—given available opportunities—probably has higher expectations than people in most Third World countries. Unhappiness could grow quickly if their expectations are increasingly disappointed.



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Appendix B

Jordan Under Hassan's Leadership

On King Hussein's death the Hashemite throne constitutionally devolves to his eldest son. The King can, however, alter the succession by royal decree, which Hussein has done in designating his younger brother Hassan as Crown Prince. To prepare the way for a smooth, uncontested transition of power, Hussein has worked closely with Hassan over the years and has appointed him regent during his frequent trips abroad.

We believe Hassan would assume rule without initial opposition. As the legal successor, he would have the backing of the military and key interest groups. No other political figure has a power base, and the newly revived Parliament is unlikely to produce any political blocs that would challenge him.

Hassan, however, will have to demonstrate strong leadership qualities from the outset to ensure his survival. [redacted]

[redacted] Hassan has less experience in foreign affairs than the King and lacks Hussein's diplomatic skills. He also lacks his brother's charm and outgoing style and does not have the warm personal relations with Jordanian constituencies that have been essential to Hussein's political success.

Hassan's contacts with the military—traditionally the most loyal support of the Hashemites—have not generated personal ties. Although US Embassy officials say he is knowledgeable in military matters and well respected by the senior officer corps, [redacted]

[redacted]

Hassan will need the support of the bedouin tribal leadership. Unlike his brother, who enjoys visiting the tribes and socializing in their tents, the more Westernized Hassan is less comfortable doing so, according to US Embassy officials. He will have to learn to be more at ease with the bedouin if he is to gain their support.

Palestinian acceptance of the monarchy is also essential to a smooth transition. Despite Hassan's vocal support for the Palestinian cause, US Embassy sources report that many Palestinians believe that it was the Crown Prince who pushed Hussein into a confrontation with the Palestinians, resulting in the civil war in 1970-71. Hassan's interest in West Bank matters presumably will please the Palestinian community.

Hassan seems to recognize his need for the support of these important political constituencies and has taken steps to improve his relations with them. US Embassy officials say that he now joins the military for field maneuvers to get to know the officers and men better.

Hassan's strengths lie chiefly in his reputation for honesty, intelligence, and hard work. According to US Embassy reporting, his work on economic development is widely respected.

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US Embassy reporting suggests that Hassan will enjoy the support of younger Jordanians who think highly of him and can identify with him because of similar age and education. He is particularly close to the small group of Western-educated technocrats who have worked with him on economic projects.

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Jordan under Hassan's rule would continue to be moderate and conservative. Hassan places great importance on close cooperation with the United States and would look to Washington for continued economic and military support.

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On the other hand, Hassan would keep lines open to the Soviet Union. Like Hussein, he probably would not hesitate to turn to the Soviets or to Europe as sources of arms if the United States rejected Jordan's requests.

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Hassan would be unlikely to alter Jordan's cautious approach to the peace process. He is deeply concerned over the fate of the West Bank and wants to achieve peace there. He would, nevertheless, insist on explicit Palestinian and moderate Arab support, as well as US guarantees and signs of Israeli flexibility before entering the peace process.



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